

# My Child Doesn't Understand Coronavirus. What Should I Do?

By The Understood Team on Mar 18, 2020



It's hard for many people to put the **coronavirus** global crisis into perspective. But understanding the big picture can often help us make sense of what's happening around us.

Some kids—and adults—have a hard time seeing the bigger context in situations. (It's common with kids who have trouble with **executive function**.) That's not necessarily a bad thing, especially for kids who get more nervous the more they hear and know.

But for other kids, not understanding what's going on makes it harder for them to cope. It raises their anxiety level because they don't always recognize that people are doing things to reduce the threat.

To help them get a broader idea of what's happening and be less anxious, start with what they know, says Ellen Braaten, PhD, director of the Learning and Emotional Assessment Program (LEAP) and co-director of the Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds at Massachusetts General Hospital.

“Correct their misconceptions and then help them organize their thinking on the topic,” Braaten says. “Emotions tend to ‘de-organize thoughts,’ so you need to keep things real.

“You could say things like: ‘Scientists predict that this kind of virus can spread quickly. But it can't spread as much when people stay apart for a while. That's why you'll be home from school for a few weeks,’” she says.

It's important to talk about what you'll do during the time off. Share how you'll continue to do things to stay healthy, like **washing hands** and getting enough sleep. Explain that doctors, nurses, and other health care workers are working very hard to understand how to help people, and they're doing a good job at it.

“To do this, you need to be informed yourself,” says Braaten. “You also need to be able to discuss this in a fairly non-emotional way.”

Get up-to-date health information about COVID-19 from the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#).

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## About the Author



### The Understood Team

is made up of passionate writers, editors, and community moderators. Many of them learn and think differently or have kids who do.

## Reviewed by



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